
PLANNING FOR IMPACTFUL SUMMER LEARNING

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To make a positive difference in a learning recovery strategy starting this summer, state and local leaders should build from what research and best practices tell us about how to have positive impacts and engage young people.

While we now know a lot about “what works” in designing and delivering summer learning opportunities under “normal” conditions, summer programs in 2021 have to be more creative than ever around staffing, engagement and building school-community partnerships. For all programs this summer, the emphasis must be on providing all students with safe, supportive environment with caring adults so they have the opportunity to recover and re-engage in learning.

When making policy and funding decisions for this summer, we recommend being very mindful to consider the following program elements, focus areas, and engaging designs:

This summer will require thinking more expansively about partners to engage including youth-serving community-based organizations, park and recreation agencies, libraries, art and cultural groups, affordable housing organizations, colleges and universities, and more.

Key areas to focus from Summer Matters pilot programs elements of high-quality summer learning.

- Broadens kids' horizons.
- Includes a wide variety of activities.
- Helps kids build skills.
- Fosters cooperative learning.
- Promotes healthy habits.
- Lasts at least one month.

Summer Matters Campaign. Definition of high-quality summer learning programs. Campaign operated from 2010-2015.



Lessons from a decade of citywide summer learning in Boston.

Think Beyond Boundaries

Cultivate a Diverse Network

Focus on Cross-Cutting Skills

Learn Together

Measure and Share Successes

*Led by Boston Afterschool & Beyond:
<http://bit.ly/BostonBeyondSummer>*

Program elements from the Wallace Foundation National Summer

Learning pilot programs:

- Voluntary, full-day programming that included academic instruction and enrichment activities (the latter mainly provided by community partners) for five days per week for no less than five weeks of the summer.
- For students struggling in the basics: at least three hours of (engaging and inspiring) language arts and mathematics instruction per day provided by a certified teacher.
- Small class sizes of no more than 15 students per instructor.
- No fees to families for participation.
- Free transportation and meals.

Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer learning programs. (2016)
Rand Corporation

Critical design and delivery ingredients:

- Employ a mix of staff connected to the local community and schools including classroom teachers and community teachers, and tutors.
- Encourage engaging learning in literacy, math, and STEAM/STEM and in other subjects by enthusiastic staff.
- Include active, enrichment experiences, such as in the arts and sports, coding and robotic clubs, service-learning, college and workforce exploration, entrepreneurial experiences, and apprenticeships.
- Use engaging and blended approaches deploying hands-on projects, social-emotional learning, arts integration, and family involvement.
- Provide positive adult supervision so parents can work enough hours.
- Offer wellness activities and address food access.

Highlights summarized from a composite of articles in Peterson, T.K. (Executive Editor), *Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success*, 4th Edition, 2017.

School-community partnerships provide a vehicle for aligning services and leaning on and utilizing the expertise, resources, and capacity that exist in multiple sectors.

Partnerships require commitment to a shared vision and may include:

- Shared professional development to ensure evidence-based practices are implemented across agencies and locations
- Delivery of wrap around services and youth enrichment
- Space sharing to expand opportunities for learning and engagement
- Shared staff to maximize capacity and tap into different expertise
- Coordinated services to meet youth and families’ economic, health, food, and other needs

